

Toki Pona

Toki Pona is a constructed language created by Canadian linguist and translator Sonja Lang in 2001. It's an experiment to see how minimalist a language can get.

This side describes the entire grammar, the other side contains the entire vocabulary.

Cheat sheet by blinry, CC0.

morr.cc/toki-pona-cheat-sheet/

Alphabet

Toki Pona uses nine consonants (*j k l m n p s t w*) and five vowels (*a e i o u*). Pronunciation doesn't really matter.

Basic sentences

The particle *li* separates the subject and the verb:

soweli li moku. = *The cat is eating.*

jan li lape. = *The person is sleeping.*

There is no verb "to be"; the part after *li* can also be a noun or an adjective.

kili li moku. = *Fruits are food.*

telo li pona. = *Water is good.*

telo li moku. = *Water is a drink.*

If the subject is *mi* or *sina*, the *li* is always omitted:

mi moku. = *I eat.*

sina pona. = *You are good.*

Ambiguity

Toki Pona has a lot of ambiguity. You'll often need to know the context to decide what things mean. For example, verbs have no tense:

mi moku. = *I am eating. / I was eating. / I will be eating.*

Many words have multiple or general meanings:

soweli = *cat / dog / (any land mammal)*

kili = *(any fruit or vegetable)*

Many words can play the role of a noun, adjective, or verb:

telo = *water / wet / to wash*

pona = *good, simple / to fix, to repair*

Nouns have no singular/plural, and no definite/indefinite article:

kili = *a fruit / the fruit / some fruits / the fruits*

Direct objects

The particle *e* separates a direct object from the rest of the sentence:

soweli li moku e telo. = *The cat drinks the water.*

mi telo e soweli. = *I'm washing the cat.*

Modifying words

Words can be modified by appending other words:

jan lili = *small human* = *child*

tomo mi = *my house*

pilin pona = *to feel good* = *to be happy*

Negation

To negate a word, append *ala*:

mi lape ala. = *I'm not sleeping.*

jan ala li toki. = *Nobody is talking.*

Questions

To ask yes-or-no questions, replace the verb with "(verb) *ala* (verb)":

sina ken ala ken lape? = *Are you able to sleep?*

soweli li wile ala wile moku? = *Is the cat hungry?*

Alternatively, append *anu seme* ("or what") to the sentence:

sina wile uta e mi anu seme? = *Do you want to kiss me?*

To answer these questions, reply with either "(verb)" or "(verb) *ala*".

To ask questions that can't be answered with yes or no, write a normal sentence and replace the word in question with *seme*:

sina moku e seme? = *What are you eating?*

seme li moku e kili mi? = *Who/what ate my fruit?*

Modifying words using pi

To modify an expression with a group of words, separate them with the particle *pi*. It can

often be thought of as "of". Note the difference:

tomo telo nasa = *crazy water house* = *strange bathroom*

tomo pi telo nasa = *house of the crazy water* = *pub*

jan wawa ala = *no strong people*

jan pi wawa ala = *people of not-strong* = *weak people*

Providing context using la

To add a context to a sentence, prepend another sentence or expression, followed by *la*. This often results in a structure like "If (part 1), then (part 2)" or "In the context of (part 1), (part2)."

mi lape la ali li pona. = *When I'm asleep, everything is okay.*

Time

You can use a *la*-clause to add a temporal context to a sentence:

tenpo ni la mi lape. = *I am sleeping right now.*

tenpo kama la mi lape. = *I will be sleeping in the future.*

tenpo pini la mi lape. = *I slept in the past.*

Compound sentences

Separate multiple subjects in a sentence using *en*:

lape en moku li suli. = *Sleep and food are important.*

To say that the subject does more than one thing, you can use multiple *li*-clauses:

pipi li moku li pakala. = *The bug eats and destroys.*

If there are several direct objects of the same verb, you can use multiple *e*-clauses:

mi moku e kili e telo. = *I consume fruit and water.*

Unofficial words

Unofficial words (like names of countries, languages, or people) are capitalized and treated like adjectives. They are attached to a noun, and often simplified to Toki Pona's limited alphabet:

mi jan Kapile. = *I'm Gabriele.*

ma Kanata li pona lukin. = *Canada is pretty.*

mi toki ala e toki Inli. = *I don't speak English.*

ma tomo Nujoka li suli. = *New York is big.*

Prepositions

lon, *kepeken*, *tawa*, and *tan* can be used as prepositions at the end of a sentence:

mi moku lon tomo. = *I eat in the house.*

mi moku kepeken ilo moku. = *I eat using a fork.*

sina pona tawa mi. = *You are good for me.* = *I like you.*

sina tawa weka tan seme? = *Why are you leaving?*

Commands

To state a command, use *o* and then what you want the person to do:

o lukin e ni! = *Look at this!*

To address someone, start a sentence with "(person) *o*,":

jan Malin o, sina pona lukin. = *Malin, you are pretty.*

You can also use this together with a command, merging the two *o*'s:

jan San o tawa tomo sina. = *Sam, go home.*

Numbers

Combine number words to add them up:

wan = 1 *tu* = 2 *luka* = 5

luka luka tu wan = 13

And... that's it!

a	(emphasis, emotion or confirmation)	laso	blue, green	olin	to love, have compassion for, respect, show affection to	suwi	sweet, fragrant; cute, innocent, adorable
akesi	non-cute animal; reptile, amphibian	lawa	head, mind; to control, direct, guide, lead, own, plan, regulate, rule	ona	he, she, it, they	tan	by, from, because of
ala	no, not, zero	len	cloth, clothing, fabric, textile; cover, layer of privacy	open	to begin, start; open; turn on	taso	but, however; only
alasa	to hunt, forage	lete	cold, cool; uncooked, raw	pakala	botched, broken, damaged, harmed, messed up	tawa	going to, toward; for; from the perspective of; moving
ali	all; abundant, countless, bountiful, every, plentiful; abundance, everything, life, universe; 100	li	(between any subject except mi alone or sina alone and its verb; also to introduce a new verb for the same subject)	pali	to do, take action on, work on; build, make, prepare	telo	water, liquid, fluid, wet substance; beverage
anpa	bowing down, downward, humble, lowly, dependent	lili	little, small, short; few; a bit; young	palisa	long hard thing; branch, rod, stick	tenpo	time, duration, moment, occasion, period, situation
ante	different, altered, changed, other	linja	long and flexible thing; cord, hair, rope, thread, yarn	pan	cereal, grain; barley, corn, oat, rice, wheat; bread, pasta	toki	to communicate, say, speak, say, talk, use language, think; hello
anu	or	lipu	flat object; book, document, card, paper, record, website	pana	to give, send, emit, provide, put, release	tomo	indoor space; building, home, house, room
awen	enduring, kept, protected, safe, waiting, staying; to continue to	loje	red, reddish	pi	of	tonsi	queer, non-binary, gender non-conforming
e	(before the direct object)	lon	located at, present at, real, true, existing	pilin	heart (physical or emotional); feeling (an emotion, a direct experience)	tu	two
en	(between multiple subjects)	luka	arm, hand, tactile organ; five	pimeja	black, dark, unlit	unpa	to have sexual or marital relations with
esun	market, shop, fair, bazaar, business transaction	lukin	to look at, see, examine, observe, read, watch; to seek, look for, try to	pini	ago, completed, ended, finished, past	uta	mouth, lips, oral cavity, jaw
ijo	thing, phenomenon, object, matter	lupa	door, hole, orifice, window	pipi	bug, insect, ant, spider	utala	to battle, challenge, compete against, struggle against
ike	bad, negative; non-essential, irrelevant	ma	earth, land; outdoors, world; country, territory; soil	poka	hip, side; next to, nearby, vicinity	walo	white, whitish; light-colored, pale
ilo	tool, implement, machine, device	mama	parent, ancestor; creator, originator; caretaker, sustainer	poki	container, bag, bowl, box, cup, cupboard, drawer, vessel	wan	unique, united; one
insa	center, content, inside, between; internal organ, stomach	mani	money, cash, savings, wealth; large domesticated animal	pona	good, positive, useful; friendly, peaceful; simple; thanks	waso	bird, flying creature, winged animal
jaki	disgusting, obscene, sickly, toxic, unclean, unsanitary	meli	woman, female, feminine person; wife	pu	interacting with the official Toki Pona book	wawa	strong, powerful; confident, sure; energetic, intense
jan	human being, person, somebody	mi	I, me, we, us	sama	same, similar; each other; sibling, peer, fellow; as, like	weka	absent, away, ignored
jelo	yellow, yellowish	mije	man, male, masculine person; husband	seli	fire; cooking element, chemical reaction, heat source	wile	must, need, require, should, want, wish
jo	to have, carry, contain, hold	moku	to eat, drink, consume, swallow, ingest	selo	outer form, outer layer; bark, peel, shell, skin; boundary		
kala	fish, marine animal, sea creature	moli	dead, dying	seme	what? which?		
kalama	to produce a sound; recite, utter aloud	monsi	back, behind, rear	sewi	area above, highest part, something elevated; awe-inspiring, divine, sacred, supernatural		
kama	arriving, coming, future, summoned; to become, manage to, succeed in	mu	(animal noise or communication)	sijelo	body (of person or animal), physical state, torso		
kasi	plant, vegetation; herb, leaf	mun	moon, night sky object, star	sike	round or circular thing; ball, circle, cycle, sphere, wheel; of one year		
ken	to be able to, be allowed to, can, may; possible	musi	artistic, entertaining, frivolous, playful, recreational	sin	new, another, more		
kepeken	to use, with, by means of	mute	many, a lot, more, much, several, very; quantity; 20	sina	you		
kili	fruit, vegetable, mushroom	namako	spice, something extra	sinpin	face, foremost, front, wall		
kin	indeed, still, too	nanpa	-th (ordinal number); number	sitelen	image, picture, representation, symbol, mark, writing		
kiwen	hard object, metal, rock, stone	nasa	unusual, strange; foolish, crazy; drunk, intoxicated	sona	to know, be skilled in, be wise about, have information on; to know how to		
ko	clay, clinging form, dough, semi-solid, paste, powder	nasin	way, custom, doctrine, method, path, road	soweli	animal, beast, land mammal		
kon	air, breath; essence, spirit; hidden reality, unseen agent	nen	bump, button, hill, mountain, nose, protuberance	suli	big, heavy, large, long, tall; important; adult		
kule	colorful, pigmented, painted	ni	that, this	sun	sun; light, brightness, glow, radiance, shine; light source		
kulupu	community, company, group, nation, society, tribe	nimi	name, word	supa	horizontal surface, thing to put or rest something on		
kute	ear; to hear, listen; pay attention to, obey	noka	foot, leg, organ of locomotion; bottom, lower part				
la	(between the context phrase and the main sentence)	o	hey! O! (vocative or imperative)				
lape	sleeping, resting	oko	eye				